

# NEXT

FIRST STEPS IN THE FAITH  
ONE-TO-ONE



**CALVARY**  
EVERETT



# STARTING THE JOURNEY

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**A**s you begin your spiritual journey as a Christian, you'll soon discover an inescapable reality: *you're not meant to go it alone*. There is so much to learn, this experience can be overwhelming without having someone to walk with you.

For this reason, NEXT is designed to cover some of the basics of your Christian faith. But beyond the facts and how-to's, the heartbeat of NEXT is discipleship. The core meaning of discipleship is one life pouring into another.

A discipleship coach will be walking with you through NEXT. One of the ways we figure out how to live as a Christian is to imitate the model of another seasoned Christian that has been walking with Christ. You'll have questions, challenges, success and failure. This is all part of growing! Lean on your coach to support you.

Jesus clearly pointed out the most important part of being a Christian: relationships. As your travel through this discipleship experience, the greatest thing that can happen is for you to deepen your relationships - with God and with others.

One final critical piece for spiritual success. Be *consistent*. If you want to advance in anything in life, you have to stay with it with steady habits. Be resolved to be constant.

Christ has brought about new life in you. Now, He wants to transform you to be more and more like Him. Press ahead!

# 01 ONE

## YOUR NEW IDENTITY

From the moment you were born, much of your physical identity was already launched: DNA, physical features, and so on. There wasn't anything you could do to change these characteristics. You were who you are from the moment of birth!

### NEW THOUGHT



When you asked Christ to come into your life, you experienced *another* birth, a *second* birth. Your first birth was *physical*, your second birth was *spiritual*. Your first birth was *external*, your second birth was *internal*. This comes to light when we dial in to a conversation that Jesus was having with a man named Nicodemus.

*In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*

JOHN 3:3-6

### KEY POINT



God ignited a new life in you when you believed in Him from your heart and depended completely on Jesus for your salvation. When you surrendered your life to Him, *His* Spirit brought *your* spirit to life. In that moment, you were born *spiritually*.

*Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a man's will, but born of God.*

JOHN 1:12-13

### DON'T MISS IT!



*At the moment of your second (spiritual) birth, you immediately have a new identity that God gives to you.*

**IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION  
THE OLD IS GONE, THE NEW IS COME!**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT YOUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST?

## YOU ARE NOW CLOSE TO GOD

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

EPHESIANS 2:13

## YOU ARE NOW SPIRITUALLY ALIVE

★ *Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*

EPHESIANS 2:4-5

## YOU ARE NOW GOD'S CHILD

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*

1 JOHN 3:1

## YOU ARE NOW USABLE TO GOD

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

EPHESIANS 2:10

## YOU ARE MUCH MORE TO GOD THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

1 PETER 2:9-10

## TALKING POINTS

As you look at your new identity in Christ from these different angles, which one stands out as the most encouraging? Are there any of these identities that you struggle with? Ones that are hard to believe?

## BRINGING IT HOME



As we go through life, from childhood through old age, we continue to develop and discover who we are. Your spiritual life in Christ will be the same. It will be a journey of continued discovery of your identity in Christ. Your spiritual birth ignited a relationship with God that will continue to unfold throughout your lifetime.

## MOVING AHEAD

*Begin to include some of these identities in your conversations (prayer) with God. For example, thank Him for being His child, for being spiritually alive, and so on.*

# 02 TWO

## THE BIBLE

Now that you have experienced a second birth, as in the first moments of your physical birth, *nourishment is critical*. One of the primary ways that we are *spiritually* nourished is by reading and studying God's Word, the Bible.

*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

1 PETER 2:2-3

## NEW THOUGHT



Jesus reminded us of our absolute need for the Bible for our spiritual growth.

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

MATTHEW 4:4

## KEY POINT



There are numerous reasons why the Bible is so critical to our spiritual growth.

### THE BIBLE IS GOD'S DIRECT WORD TO US

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

### THE BIBLE ANSWERS THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS OF LIFE

Why am I on the planet? What is God like? What is God's desire for my life? What happens when I die? Where did evil come from? How does my life matter? How do I approach God? The Bible is a light that gives definitive answers and clarity to the countless questions of life.

★ *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

PSALM 119:105

### THE BIBLE COMMUNICATES TO OUR INNER BEING

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

HEBREWS 4:12

### THE BIBLE FUELS US TO LIVE FOR GOD

*The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*

JOHN 6:63

### THE BIBLE IS OUR MORAL COMPASS

*How can a young man keep His way pure? By living according to Your word.*

PSALM 119:9

# HOW DO I READ THE BIBLE?

After learning the benefits of reading the Word of God, you are still faced with the reality that the Bible can be overwhelming. It is helpful to understand that the Bible is a collection of 66 books. Knowing where to start can be a challenge.

*Here is a suggested list of books in the Bible to start reading. At the same time, experiment with adding one chapter from Psalms and one chapter from Proverbs each day.*

John  
Mark  
I John

Genesis  
Exodus  
Ephesians

Galatians  
Luke  
Matthew

I Corinthians  
II Corinthians  
Romans

## DON'T MISS IT!



*Here are some things to keep in mind as you read the Bible.*

### PRAY BEFORE YOU READ

Simply ask God to show you what he wants you to understand as you read.

*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your word.*

PSALM 119:18

### USE THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE FOR PRAYER

You can express your heart to God using passages from the Bible. The book of Psalms is especially good for this type of prayer. *The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.*

PSALM 145:18

### GET IN A ROUTINE

Most likely, you have a routine with your meals during a typical day. Consider the Bible to be as necessary as the meals you eat. Your spiritual habits directly impact your spiritual growth. *Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds.*

DEUTERONOMY 11:18

### DON'T WORRY IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING

The Bible is full of profound and mysterious passages. When you come across something you don't understand, don't get stuck. God will reveal what he wants you to know. Learning the Bible takes time; digest it in bite-sized pieces!

*Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."*

MATTHEW 16:17

### APPLY WHAT YOU READ!

We don't read the Bible to merely glean information. Rather, God wants to bring about *transformation*. Apply what you read to your everyday life – it will be life-changing! *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

JAMES 1:22

## TOOLBOX



Here are some helpful tools that can boost your experience in reading the Bible.

*The Bible Project* ([jointhebibleproject.com](http://jointhebibleproject.com))

*Blue Letter Bible App* ([blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org))

# 03 THREE

## PRAYER



### NEW THOUGHT

In addition to the Bible, prayer is one of the main ways that we communicate with God. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He never questioned whether or not they would pray. He said “*When you pray ... not if you pray.*”



THE HEART OF PRAYER IS  
THE PRAYER OF THE HEART.



C. H. SPURGEON

### KEY POINT

**BEFORE A WORD IS ON MY TONGUE YOU KNOW IT COMPLETELY, O LORD.**

PSALM 139:4



Prayer should be natural and from the heart. There is no requirement to have a polished presentation. Simply speak to God from your heart. He already knows what is on your mind.

### DON'T MISS IT!



*Don't underestimate the power and the impact of prayer.*

### JESUS PRAYED FREQUENTLY.

*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

LUKE 5:16

### PRAYER KEEPS US STRONG AGAINST TEMPTATION

*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.*

MATTHEW 26:41

### PRAYER BRINGS ABOUT PEACE

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

### PRAYER KEEPS US CLOSE TO GOD

★ *Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.*

JAMES 4:8

### PRAYER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

JAMES 5:16



# WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES TO CULTIVATE A STRONG PRAYER LIFE?

From the moment you were born, much of your physical identity was already launched: DNA, physical features, and so on. There wasn't anything you could do to change these characteristics. You were who you are from the moment of birth!

## 1. GOD IS EVERYWHERE SO YOU CAN PRAY ANYWHERE.

*There isn't a "sacred" space required for prayer.*

## 2. PRAY REGULARLY.

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.*

EPHESIANS 6:18

## 3. USE A PRAYER LIST (JOURNAL).

*You'll be more specific in your prayers and it's exciting to keep track of answered prayer.*

## 4. STRUCTURE IS SOMETIMES HELPFUL.

*When Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Matthew 6:9-13), it was a blueprint. Here is a very effective template to follow: ACTS – Adoration, Confession, Thanks, Supplication (prayer for others and yourself).*

## 5. PRAY THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE.

*Using passages in the Bible is very powerful. Since the book of Psalms is primarily a book of prayer and worship, this is a perfect place to engage.*

## 6. STOP TO LISTEN.

*Prayer is not all about you talking, it's also being quiet enough to sense God's presence and His guidance. Keep something nearby to take notes.*

## 7. FIND A QUIET PLACE.

*Distraction is the enemy of prayer. Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

LUKE 5:16

## 8. PRAY OUT LOUD SOMETIMES.

*Praying out loud, even softly, can often help keep your thoughts from wandering.*

## 9. TRY KEEPING A REGULAR TIME OF DAY TO PRAY.

*Habits are built from repetition. Because you want to be consistent, choosing a regularly scheduled time of day will help.*

## 10. PRAY ALL THE TIME.

*Even though it's important to stop, find a quiet place, and pray, don't let it be limited to that time. Pray throughout the day! Pray continually.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

## TALKING POINTS

Have you had much experience praying? What are some of the challenges you have in praying? How could you expand your prayer life?

## BRINGING IT HOME



Pick one or two of the strategies above to try this week.  
Try to be consistent enough that they become a habit.

## MOVING AHEAD

*God has created you to have a relationship with Him. He loves when you spend time with Him because time is an indispensable ingredient in any meaningful relationship.*

# 04 FOUR

## BAPTISM

### NEW THOUGHT



New believers in Christ are commanded to be baptized. With very few exceptions, those recorded in the Bible who experienced a second birth in Christ were immediately baptized.

***But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.***

ACTS 8:12

### KEY POINT



At the core, baptism is an act of humility. As with all other areas of spiritual life, Jesus sets the model first. As an act of humility and obedience, Christ was baptized.

***When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.***

LUKE 3:21

***Don't delay in getting baptized. Jesus was baptized at the very outset of His ministry as He was launching into the public arena. The reason? He was sending a message that He was unreservedly submitting to the Father in all things. This humility set the stage for everything that followed in Christ's ministry. The same is true for you. Begin your new life in Christ with a humble footing and this will set the course of your spiritual journey with God.***

### DON'T MISS IT!



***Baptism does not save us. This is why baptism follows salvation. There is nothing we can do to earn our way to God's favor.***

***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.***

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS,  
BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF  
THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,  
AND TEACHING THEM TO OBEY  
EVERYTHING I HAVE COMMANDED YOU.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

# WHY SHOULD I TAKE THE STEP TO GET BAPTIZED?

## MAKES A PUBLIC STATEMENT

Jesus unashamedly displayed His love for us as he publicly hung on the cross. Our love for him is to be public, not private. By definition, baptism is an outward indication of an inward change. *I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed.*

2 TIMOTHY 1:12

## DEMONSTRATES OBEDIENCE

The call to be baptized comes directly from God. Baptism is an action of obedience. *We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands.*

1 JOHN 2:3

## SYMBOLIZES OUR COMMITMENT

When a couple gets married, they typically wear wedding rings to signify their lifetime commitment. The rings, of course, do not make the couple married, they simply *symbolize* what has happened. Baptism is exactly that, a symbol of a lifetime commitment to follow Christ. *Baptism is "the pledge of a good conscience toward God."*

1 PETER 3:21

## PAINTS A VISUAL OF THE GOSPEL

The word *baptize* comes from the Greek word that means *immerse*. The act of baptism paints a picture of the gospel as we identify with Christ being immersed in death and burial, then being raised from the dead to new life.

★ *We were buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

ROMANS 6:4

## TALKING POINTS

*What stands out to you as the most important reason to be baptized?*

*What impact does it have on you to realize that even Jesus was baptized?*

## BRINGING IT HOME



Baptism is a beautiful picture that sends a strong message of what God has done in your life. This is one of your first opportunities to obey God, share your decision publicly, and demonstrate your lifetime commitment to follow Christ.

## MOVING AHEAD

*In the New Testament, we see a man who has just believed in Christ. He immediately asks the question, "What prevents me from being baptized?" How do you answer that question? If nothing is preventing you being baptized, take the step of obedience and get baptized.*

# 05 FIVE

## HOLY SPIRIT

God has always been a pursuer. Since the outset of His relationship with humans, God has been relentlessly devoted to come after us, even in our worst moments. We were created because God undeniably wanted to be *with us*. In fact, one of the names of Jesus – *Immanuel* – means exactly that: *God with us*.

This commitment to be *with us* was extended in a promise that Christ made at the end of His life: *I am with you always, even to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:20). How could God possibly accomplish this promise? His solution is both miraculous and mysterious ... *the Holy Spirit*.

## NEW THOUGHT



When we are born spiritually, the Holy Spirit ignites our spirit and then lives inside of us. This is a move of profound intimacy on God's part. God is fulfilling his promise to always be with us. He gave birth to us (spiritually) and He will not leave us as orphans.

*And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth ... He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

JOHN 14:16-18

## KEY POINT



Living a life that is in rhythm with Christ is absolutely impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit working within us. Prayer, understanding the Bible, telling others about Christ, overcoming sin, etc. are all impossible without unreservedly relying on and tapping into the power of the Spirit of God.

## DON'T MISS IT!



*The Holy Spirit is not a nebulous, impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is a "person" who is equal to the Father and to Jesus.*

THE SPIRIT HIMSELF TESTIFIES  
WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE  
GOD'S CHILDREN

ROMANS 8:16

# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

## TRANSFORMS OUR CHARACTER FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Religion attempts to change people's behavior from the *outside*. God changes us from the *inside*. With the Holy Spirit working from the inside, God progressively infuses His influence to produce His likeness in us (the Bible refers to this as "fruit"). *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

GALATIANS 5:22

## TEACHES AND REMINDS US OF TRUTH

In a world where many see truth as irrelevant, the Holy Spirit points the way to truth. *The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

JOHN 14:25-26

## HELPS US PRAY

*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come.*

JOHN 16:13

The Holy Spirit deepens our connection in prayer. *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*

ROMANS 8:26

## REVEALS GOD'S HEART

The Holy Spirit acts as an inner translator revealing God's heart. *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

1 CORINTHIANS 2:11

## TALKING POINTS

★ *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

How would you answer this question that God puts for ward?

Have you seen evidence of God living inside you?

## BRINGING IT HOME



God makes the extraordinary move of not only living *with* us, but also living *in* us. As mysterious as this seems, if you continually depend on the Holy Spirit within you, and are willing to be governed and navigated by the Holy Spirit, you will see remarkable transformation.

## MOVING AHEAD

*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

GALATIANS 5:25

# 06 SIX

## TEMPTATION

In the early stages of our spiritual journey with Christ, there can be an unexpected intersection: *temptation*. We can mistakenly believe that we will no longer struggle with temptation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even Jesus was tempted.

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil.*

LUKE 4:1-2

The question, then, isn't whether or not you'll face temptation. You will. The question to answer is where does it come from and how do you prevail when tempted?

## NEW THOUGHT



Temptation does not come from God. He does not tempt us to sin. As soon as we begin to follow Christ, we are in a spiritual conflict. First, we face the enemies of God that exist in the spiritual realm. As heavy as this seems, it's real.

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

EPHESIANS 6:12

Second, we are tempted by our own desires (the Bible refers to this as our flesh).

*When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

JAMES 1:13-15

## KEY POINT



Temptation has a way of making us feel private and secluded. Since Christ was "tempted in every way, just as we are" (Hebrews 4:15), He understands the dynamic of the tension when facing temptation.

Because of this reality, we can face the winds of temptation with confidence, knowing that God identifies with our struggle.

## DON'T MISS IT!



***Temptation is not sin! It is easy to confuse one with the other. Jesus was tempted, "yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This demonstrates that temptation is not sin.***

# HOW DO I DEAL WITH TEMPTATION WHEN I FACE IT?

## PRAY

*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.*

MARK 14:38

## SHUN AND RUN

*But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith.*

1 TIMOTHY 6:11-12

## INFUSE THE WORD

*I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.*

PSALM 119:11

*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

EPHESIANS 6:17

## RELY ON GOD'S POWER

*Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*

EPHESIANS 6:10-11

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you.*

JAMES 4:7-8

## DIE DAILY TO SELF

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

GALATIANS 2:20

## TALKING POINTS

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

*Do you think you are prepared to face temptation with the tools God has provided?*

## BRINGING IT HOME



There are no exemptions: everyone faces temptation. Remember, God will always provide a way out. There is God's part and there is your part. Take advantage of the tools that God makes available. Above all, remember this: God is greater than *any* temptation you face.

## MOVING AHEAD

★ *The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

1 JOHN 4:4

# 07 SEVEN

## GOD'S LOVE

Our view of God's love for us can be based on the archive of our experiences with other human beings. For example, how others have responded in years past to our failures can dictate how we believe God will respond. But remember, God is different. His love for us is *perfect ... no matter what*. The concept of perfect love is foreign to us, so we have to readjust our thinking.

### NEW THOUGHT



God's love towards us *never changes*. Even though we are accustomed to human love fluctuating based on our behavior and performance, God's love is fixed forever.

*I have loved you with an everlasting love.*

JEREMIAH 31:3

How can this be? The key is understanding who God is at His very core. God not only loves, but He *IS* love.

**God *IS* love.**

That means it is impossible for God to not love, just like water cannot be dry. Water is always wet; God is always love. Therefore, God's love doesn't waver.

1 JOHN 4:8

### KEY POINT



Once we believe that God's love doesn't vacillate, our approach to Him will never be the same. Why? In a word: *confidence*. We can possess a sureness when we approach Him that His love for us is absolutely unwavering.

***For I am CONVINCED that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

ROMANS 8:38-39

### DON'T MISS IT!



Jesus often illustrated truth through storytelling. One of the most vivid pictures of God's unwavering love was found in the story of the Prodigal Son. The plot summits at the return of a wayward son to his father (a picture of God).

Not knowing whether the love of the father would now be different, the son nervously trudged home only to be surprised by the faithfulness of his father's love.

***So the son got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.***

LUKE 15:20

Even in the most dishonorable chapter of his life, the son experienced an unconditional, open-armed acceptance from his father. See the picture that Jesus painted?



# WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I SIN?

## REALIZE THAT HIS LOVE FOR YOU HAS NOT DIMINISHED AT ALL

Remember that God loved you before you surrendered to him. He loved you then, He loves you now. His love has not changed. *But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

ROMANS 5:8

## KEEP SHORT ACCOUNTS

Make it a habit to take inventory often and confess your sins without delay. *Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.*

PSALM 19:12-13

## KNOW THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL

God must be faithful. Have confidence that He will know the brokenness of your heart and He will forgive - every single time.

★ *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 JOHN 1:9

## TRUST IN GOD'S LOVE

At the end of the day, it all comes down to trust. Never doubt the unfailing love that God has for you. Remember, it is impossible for God to not love. *I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever.*

PSALM 52:8

## TALKING POINTS

*Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has born? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.*

ISAIAH 49:15-16

These words are critical because they highlight the difference between the human capacity to love and God's capacity to love. Do you trust that God's love towards you is reliable and unshakable ... no matter what?

## BRINGING IT HOME



Let this reality sink in: God will love you forever with a love that *cannot* waver.

*You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.*

PSALM 86:5

## MOVING AHEAD

As you move forward in your relationship with God, continue to pray that your understanding of His unconditional love for you will deepen. If you fall, confess, believe, get up, and move forward, knowing that God's love for you hasn't changed.

# 08 EIGHT

## SHARE HIS STORY

As stunning as it might seem, God uses *us* to reach other people with His message. The staggering reality is that the *rescued* (us) are engaged to play a role in the message of rescue. God borrows our voice to reach the world with His story.

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20

### NEW THOUGHT



Sharing the message of Christ is both a privilege and an assignment that God has given to every follower of Christ.



*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.*

JOHN 15:16

### KEY POINT



You don't have to be a Bible expert to share the message of Christ. The love of God demonstrated by giving His Son to die for us is profound in meaning, *but the storyline is simple*. Begin with how *His* story intersected with *your* story. Put plainly, start being a messenger for God by simply telling others what He has done for you and how you have found new life in Christ.

*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard.*

1 JOHN 1:3

*One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*

JOHN 9:25

### DON'T MISS IT!



Along your life experience, being armed with the word of God and being reliant on the Holy Spirit, you can become an effective messenger for Christ. Here are four Bible verses that communicate the message (the gospel) of Christ:

- *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
- *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- *But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

ROMANS 3:23

ROMANS 6:23

ROMANS 5:8

ROMANS 10:9-10

# WHY SHOULD I SHARE MY FAITH WITH OTHERS?

## JESUS GIVES US THE CHARGE

*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*

JOHN 20:21

## ETERNITY IS EVERY PERSON'S DESTINATION

*Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.*

ECCLESIASTES 7:2

## GOD DOESN'T WANT ANYONE TO ENTER ETERNITY WITHOUT HIM

*God does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

2 PETER 3:9

## WE HOLD THE ANSWER TO HUMANITY'S PREDICAMENT OF SIN

*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*

ACTS 4:12

## PEOPLE MATTER TO GOD. HIS LOVE FOR PEOPLE SHOULD DRIVE US

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14

## TALKING POINTS

*If you were to speak to a friend today about faith in Christ, what would you say?*

*Take a few minutes right now to practice telling your story.*

## BRINGING IT HOME



*When you are willing to share your faith, you will be in sync with Christ, His mission, and His heart for people.*

*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*

LUKE 19:10

## MOVING AHEAD

Commit to God to be willing to share your story with someone. As you do, pray and depend on the Holy Spirit to work through you.

*The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.*

LUKE 12:12

Here are some tools that will further equip you to share your faith:



- *Talking About God, Steve Saccone*
- *How Good Is Good Enough?, Andy Stanley*
- *The Master Plan of Evangelism, Robert Coleman*

# 09 NINE

## COMMUNITY

At the completion of every stage of creation, God assessed each thing to be good, with the exception of one thing: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). As this is true for the *physical* world, it’s also true for the *spiritual* world. Growing spiritually requires others around you.

***Encourage one another and build each other up.***

**1 THESSALONIANS 5:12**

## NEW THOUGHT



The New Testament gives us two pictures of community (relationships) for the follower of Christ. The first picture is *family*. Nearly 250 times, followers of Christ are referred to as brothers and sisters, “members of God’s household” (Ephesians 2:19).

The second picture is the *body*, with the example of how each part of the body depends on the other parts of the body.

***In Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.***

**ROMANS 12:5**

## KEY POINT



God has never operated generically or randomly. In other words, everything He makes is designed with order and purpose. Because God places the highest value on people and relationships, He has intentionally designed a place where your spiritual growth has the highest chance of increasing. What is that place? It’s the *church*. With all of its imperfections, the local church is still the primary place God has designed to help you grow to your greatest spiritual potential.

★ ***Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.***

**HEBREWS 10:25**

## DON'T MISS IT!



The local church is never optional for God. Outside of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John telling the storyline of Jesus), all of the New Testament is written in the context of local churches. The local church is where the relational action is found! We find a recurring phrase throughout the New Testament: “*one another.*” These “*one another’s*” were lived out through the close relationships in the local church. Here are some of the “*one another’s*” found in the New Testament:

***Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)***

***Accept one another (Romans 15:7)***

***Instruct one another (Romans 15:14)***

***Carry one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)***

***Encourage one another (1 Thess 4:18)***

***Pray for each other (James 5:16)***

***Forgiving each other (Ephesians 4:32)***

***Bearing with one another (Ephesians 4:2)***

***Love one another (John 13:34)***

***Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)***

# WHY SHOULD I BECOME PART OF A CHURCH?

## RUNNING SOLO IS DANGEROUS

You've seen it in wildlife scenes: a wounded gazelle running alone is the target of the predator. Becoming part of a local church links you with a band of others who are in the same journey together. ***Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.***

**ECCLESIASTES 4:12**

## ENCOURAGED AND BUILT UP

As a follower of Christ, encouragement is required fuel for the spiritual journey. Picture embers in a glowing fire. Remove one by itself and it dies out. ***And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.***

**HEBREWS 10:24**

## TRUTH

There are countless assortments of beliefs in our culture. Being in a church that has solid Bible teaching is absolutely critical for a new believer. ***Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.***

**EPHESIANS 4:14**

## ROLE MODELS

In some areas of life, we must learn from those who model and demonstrate. Being a part of a church allows you to identify some role models and in the context of a spiritual community, follow their pattern of living.

***Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.***

**PHILIPPIANS 3:17**

## WORSHIP

Worship is the act of humbling ourselves together before the Creator of the universe. Worshipping together is an experience that is of great benefit to your spiritual life. ***Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.***

**PSALM 95:6**

## TALKING POINTS

***Do you see the value in becoming part of a local church?***

***Do you have any hesitations? If so, what are your concerns or questions?***

## BRINGING IT HOME



God refers to the church as the Body of Christ because He understands, as our Creator, that we need each other more than we realize.

***The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"***

**1 CORINTHIANS 12:21**

## MOVING AHEAD

If you haven't already, pray about becoming part of a local church. ***This is an important decision and a critical step in your spiritual journey.***

# 10 TEN

## SERVING

As you are building some solid footing to your faith, it's now time to add some action: *serving*. Jesus put great emphasis on the importance of serving. He understood that serving has tremendous benefits.

“  
THE GREATEST AMONG YOU  
WILL BE YOUR SERVANT.

MATTHEW 23:11

## NEW THOUGHT



Hopefully, you have come to realize that no one can ever do enough good to earn God's love. Whatever actions we do for God are a *response* to His love, never to win His love. This gets to the heart of serving. If done with the right attitude, serving is simply responding to God's love in order to demonstrate how thankful we are.

*Serve the Lord faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things He has done for you.*

1 SAMUEL 12:24

## KEY POINT



God brought us to life spiritually so that we would serve Him in ways that he intentionally planned well in advance. God changed your life, not just for heaven, but to serve Him during your life on planet earth!

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

EPHESIANS 2:10

## DON'T MISS IT!



Serving is not about *doing* - it's about *being* and *becoming*. God always looks at the attitude with which we do things. A true servant sees through the lenses of humility. This is what God values.



*Serve God with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.*

1 CHRONICLES 28:9

# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SERVING?

## KEEPS US FROM GROWING STAGNANT

One of the ways that your faith comes alive is in finding ways to serve. The opposite is also true. If you aren't active in serving, your spiritual life will become stale.

*Faith without deeds is dead.*

JAMES 2:26

*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

ROMANS 12:11

## WE MODEL JESUS

Our faith can't stop at mere concepts; there must be a constant *demonstration* that paints a picture of Jesus lived out in practical ways. Serving is a visible way to model Jesus, who He was, what He did, and what was important to Him.

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

JOHN 13:15

*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.*

MATTHEW 20:28

## PERSONAL REWARD OF PURPOSE

The expression is true, "What you put into something, you get out of it." If you are only a spiritual consumer, you will miss a valuable reward of serving: *purpose*.

*For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.*

LUKE 6:38

## GOD WILL REWARD US

When your life is over and you stand before Christ, he will be excited to reward you for your serving. We cannot comprehend that moment when Christ recognizes our acts of service if done with a humble attitude.

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

1 PETER 4:10

## TALKING POINTS

*In what area of your life do you think God has gifted you?*

*How do you see God using that gift in a way that you could serve?*

## BRINGING IT HOME



Serving is enormously important to your spiritual growth. More than anything, serving positions us to be closely in rhythm with God.

*Where I am, my servant also will be.*

JOHN 12:26

## MOVING AHEAD

Pray about a place to serve. Begin in your local church, serve with a humble attitude and with unreserved enthusiasm.

*Hold fast to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul.*

JOSHUA 22:5

# 11 ELEVEN

## WILL OF GOD

As you grow spiritually and become closer to God, a change of ambition starts to take place. You move from seeking what *you* want in life to a pursuit of what *God* wants and desires. This is referred to as the “*will of God*.” In fact, Jesus taught us to pursue the will of God in what we know as the “Lord’s Prayer.”

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

MATTHEW 6:10

## NEW THOUGHT



It’s tempting to fall into thinking that “finding God’s will” is like trying to look into a crystal ball to determine your future. This adds a lot of unnecessary pressure to your spiritual life.

God doesn’t always give us the details of the future because He wants us to completely trust Him for the future by obeying Him in the present. God’s message and directive to Abraham is a great example of this:

***Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.***

GENESIS 12:1

God wanted Abraham to be obedient in the present (leaving his country) and depend on Him to reveal future details. God didn’t tell him many details in advance about the future destination – the only instruction was “I will show you.”

## KEY POINT



There are a great number of places in the Bible that disclose God’s will. Many times, the challenge isn’t *knowing* God’s will, it’s actually *doing* God’s will. Jesus *knew* God’s will was that He was to die for the sins of the world. Coming to the place of *doing* this was not as easy.

***Going a little farther, Jesus fell with His face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.”***

MATTHEW 26:39

## DON’T MISS IT!



There are some things that God wills that will happen regardless of our actions. These things are set in stone and *will* take place. With other things, however, God communicates His desire (His will), but *gives us the freedom to choose*. For example, it is God’s will that we ultimately make disciples, but we have been given the choice to obey or not.

***Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise ... do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.***

EPHESIANS 5:15-17

Take note: it is entirely possible to be a Christian, yet not be pursuing God’s will. This leads to a flat, unexciting spiritual life. The more in sync we are with God’s will, the more energized our spiritual journey will be.



# WHAT ARE SOME WAYS I CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD WANTS?

## SPEND TIME IN THE WORD OF GOD

God has communicated his heart in the Bible. If you want to know what he desires, this is the best place to start. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.* **PSALM 119:105**

The more you know God's Word, the more you'll understand His will. *Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.* **ROMANS 12:1-2**

## SPEND TIME IN PRAYER

We pray for many purposes, but one central reason is to link into God's heart. Sometimes we miss God's direction simply because we haven't asked. *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.* **JAMES 1:5**

The closer we get to God, the more we begin to recognize His steering in our lives. *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me.* **JOHN 10:27**

## SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS

God speaks to us through his Word, in prayer, and at times, He uses other people in our pursuit of finding His will. We can't rely solely on our own thoughts and perceptions. *The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.* **PROVERBS 12:15**

Avoiding input from others can be risky. Surround yourself with people that you trust; it will make a significant difference in your spiritual walk with God. *For lack of counsel a nation falls, in the multitude of counselors there is safety.* **PROVERBS 11:14**

## TALKING POINTS

*Name three things that you unquestionably know are God's will. If you were to pick one of these and advance your life in this area, what would you do?*

## BRINGING IT HOME



God has a blueprint for your journey in life. You can be sure that he has the ability to help you live out His will for your life.

★ *... being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* **PHILIPPIANS 1:6**

## MOVING AHEAD

Instead of being restless about your future, put God first today, surrender your will to His will, and be obedient to the things you *know* He wants of you.

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.* **MATTHEW 6:33-34**

# 12 TWELVE

## LIFE SUPPORT

Our physical existence is sustained by God, every minute of every day, every breath, every blink, every chapter of our lives.

*He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. For in Him we live and move and have our being.*

ACTS 17:25

ACTS 17:28

*For by Him all things were created ... and in Him all things hold together.*

COLOSSIANS 1:16-17

## NEW THOUGHT



The same is true for our spiritual lives. We need God more than we think. Jesus made a statement that brought this truth to a new level.

*... apart from me you can do nothing.*

JOHN 15:5

Our need for God is like *Life Support*. That means that you are utterly, thoroughly, and drastically reliant on God for every single aspect of your spiritual life.

## KEY POINT



We become dependent on whatever source gives us life. From the beginning, humans became dependent on God as the source of physical life when God breathed into Adam.

***The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.***

JOB 33:4

Our second birth is also tethered to God. Like He breathed into Adam for physical life, Christ breathes into us the Holy Spirit to ignite spiritual life.

*Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

JOHN 20:22

This creates a real dependence on God for our spiritual life. He is the source of eternal life!

*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life ... he has crossed over from death to life.*

JOHN 5:24

## DON'T MISS IT!



Jesus paints a striking picture of our absolute need for Him through the imagery of a vine and branches. Remove a branch from a vine and it becomes impossible to be productive. This is the key! *We must consistently remain in Him, depending every day on His spiritual life support.*

★ *I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.*

JOHN 15:5

# WHY SHOULD YOU CONSISTENTLY FIGHT TO REMAIN IN CHRIST?

## GOD IS OUR ONE AND ONLY SOURCE

Christ is the *only* source that can provide everything we need for our spiritual growth.

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.*

2 PETER 1:3

*For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

1 CORINTHIANS 8:6

## DEEP SATISFACTION IN OUR INNER BEING

God is able to satisfy our deepest needs and desires in that inner place where no one else can reach.

*You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.*

PSALM 145:16

## GOD'S SUPPLY IS ENDLESS

Everything in everyday life has a limited supply. In other words, it all runs out. We can continually count on God's supply to be unlimited. *God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

## SHELTER

There is no other place than God's presence where we find refuge in our most testing times. When we live a consistently dependent life with God, we will not doubt His presence. *For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.*

PSALM 27:5

## TALKING POINTS

*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

MATTHEW 10:29-31

Is it hard to believe that God is this tuned in to your life?

What tangible things can you do to be more dependent on God in your everyday life?

## BRINGING IT HOME



The more aware you are of your absolute dependence on God, the more you will live in rhythm with Him. This is why you were created and what God deeply desires.

*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

MICAH 6:8

## MOVING AHEAD

The key to remaining in God is consistently pursuing Him. If you seek, you'll find. It's that simple.

*But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

DEUTERONOMY 4:29



